



Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Department
Agriculture and Rural Development Directorate
Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food

Inception Report

Regional Project to Promote Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) in West Africa

WITH TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT:



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1 INTRODUCTION

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as part of its regional agricultural policy created on 18 June 2015 with its partners, a West African Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) whose objective is to support the implementation of the ECOWAP/CAADP CAA Intervention Framework by providing a mechanism for consultation, coordination, convergence, capitalisation and monitoring of the various initiatives.

As part of the operationalization of the alliance and the implementation of commitments to protect the environment and support States in their efforts to combat climate change, ECOWAS in collaboration with the West African Development Bank (BOAD) has mobilized resources from the Adaptation Fund (AF) to finance a regional project to promote climate-smart agriculture in West Africa. The resource mobilisation process is part of a call for regional project proposals launched by the AF in 2015. ECOWAS benefited from the support of BOAD, which is a regional entity of the Adaptation Fund, for the project management, submission and signature of the Grant Agreement with the AF. The project was selected by the Board of Directors of the Adaptation Fund, by Decision No. B31-32/16 and notified to BOAD by letter No. 2018/420 dated 18 July 2018. The amount of the project which is a grant of fourteen million US dollars (USD 14,000,000).

The project is approved for development in transboundary areas particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in the following five countries Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger and Togo. It is designed to implement a series of activities that build on each other to generate the necessary agro-climatic information and support a more resilient agricultural system.

The approval of the project was made with conditions, the lifting of which is essential for a good start and a better implementation of the activities.

This report covers the project's start-up activities in 2020 and the prospects for implementation during 2021. It is structured around the following points:

- reminder of the objectives and components of the project;
- start-up activities.

2 REMINDER OF THE OBJECTIVES AND COMPONENTS OF THE PROJECT

2.1 Project objectives

Overall, the project aims to reduce the vulnerability of farmers and pastoralists to increased climate risks. These risks are a barrier to food security, income generation and the provision of ecosystem services in poor communities.

The specific objectives of the project are

- Reinforcing technical knowledge and capacity through regional and local interactions to promote climate resilient agricultural practices;

- Reinforcing best practices for climate change adaptation in agriculture and pastoralism at both local and regional levels;
- To share knowledge and disseminate lessons learned on resilient best agricultural practices related to climate-smart agriculture (CSA).

2.2 Project components

The project is built on three technical components summarised in the following table.

Table 1: Components of the AIC Project

COMPONENTS	Total cost excl. (1000 USD)
Component 1: Strengthening technical knowledge and capacity through regional and local interactions for the promotion of climate resilient agriculture practices	2285
Component 2: Scaling up of best practices related to climate change adaptation in agriculture and pastoralism at the local level	8848
Component 3: Knowledge sharing on resilient best agricultural practices related to climate smart agriculture	440
Project implementation costs	1331
Total cost of the project	12904
Management costs of the project implementation entity	1096
Total cost of the Adaptation Fund	14000

The following results are expected from the implementation of these components

- Climate services adapted to the needs of producers are available with the support of national and regional institutions and can be used by producers;
- Building knowledge and climate-resilient agricultural practices ;
- Contribution of agricultural and livestock practices to population resilience for improved productivity, income and carbon sequestration;
- Strengthening and disseminating knowledge on resilient best agricultural practices related to climate-friendly agriculture.

3 START-UP ACTIVITIES

The detailed project document was approved by the Adaptation Fund on 16 July 2018. Following this act, a series of activities have been carried out in the framework of the project start-up. Thus, from the date of approval until 31 December 2020, the activities carried out concern institutional arrangements, preparation for the lifting of suspensive conditionalities, actions to set up the project management bodies and the regional workshop to launch the project.

3.1 Institutional Arrangement: Preparation and signing of the Grant Management Agreement

The project was initiated by ECOWAS in collaboration with BOAD as an accredited entity to the Adaptation Fund.

The implementation of the project involved the following institutions

- The West African Development Bank (BOAD) which is the accredited implementing agency and therefore has the responsibility of administering the Grant, making Disbursements from the Grant, supervising, ensuring the proper implementation of the Project and submitting periodic reports to the Adaptation Fund in accordance with the Grant Agreement ECOWAS is the main beneficiary of the grant through its Implementing Agency, the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF) .

For the implementation of the project, a number of tasks were carried out and resulted in the signing of a grant agreement between BOAD and ECOWAS.

Thus, the draft grant agreement prepared by BOAD was submitted to ECOWAS for analysis and contributions. ECOWAS through its concerned structures, notably the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, the RAAF and the Directorate of Legal Affairs, analysed and made contributions to the document .

In order to harmonise views and gain a common understanding of the content of this grant agreement, a meeting by video conference was organised on 11 June 2020 between experts from the ECOWAS Commission, the RAAF and BOAD. The meeting, which was attended by legal experts from the two institutions (RAAF and BOAD), provided an opportunity to discuss the legal and institutional framework of the grant management agreement and the process of finalising the collection of indicators (**Annex 1**);

The meeting agreed that:

- the grant management agreement be signed between the President of BOAD and the President of the ECOWAS Commission;
- the RAAF clearly specifies the institutional framework at country level with the various state institutions or structures involved in project implementation.

Following the harmonisation of the various points and validation of the document, the grant agreement was signed on 18 September 2020 for BOAD by its President and for ECOWAS by the President of the Commission.

This Grant Management Agreement specifies the terms and conditions for the provision and use of the Grant allocated by the Adaptation Fund to the Beneficiary in the framework of the Project.

3.2 Preparation of conditionality lifts

The Adaptation Fund in approving the project on 16 June 2018 had formulated a number of actions that will need to be implemented from the start of the project. These include: (i) finalising the terms of reference of the scope committees and the cost management structure, (ii) identifying a list of permitted activities, including inherent risks, and in line with national requirements, according to the 15 principles of the environmental and social policy, (iii) preparing a methodology for the identification of relevant risks when identifying unidentified sub-projects, and for each participating country, the country-specific elements that will be required for the identification of risks and included in the methodology, (iv) the assessment for each participating country of the personnel and capacities needed to implement the environmental and social management plan, and the financial implications reflected in a revised budget, (v) the development of guidelines on the safe use of pesticides.

For the implementation of these actions, a preparatory meeting was organised on 30 October 2019 (**Annex 2**) and brought together BOAD, RAAF and the firm Global Lead which had supported the formulation of the detailed project proposal. This meeting made it possible to deepen the reflections started the day after the approval, in order to find adequate solutions for the realisation of the actions to lift the suspensive conditions of the project. The meeting also made it possible to clarify the essential points relating to the implementation of the project, in particular the various project management bodies (Regional Project Management Unit, Project Steering Committee, National Project Activities Coordination Unit). At the end of these discussions, a document on the implementation of the conditionality lifting actions was elaborated by Global Lead and submitted to RAAF and BOAD for their appreciation (**Annex 3**).

3.3 Establishment of the project management bodies

For its implementation, the project has foreseen the establishment of the following bodies

The Regional Project Steering Committee (RPSC). This is the governing body for the implementation of the project with the mandate to (i) validate the Annual Budget and Work Programme (AWBP); (ii) ensure that the orientations of the project activities are in line with those of the full proposal; (iii) provide recommendations and guidance on the next steps in the implementation of the project.

The Regional Project Management Unit (RPMU). It is the implementing and coordinating body for the project's activities at regional level. Its general mission is to: (i) prepare the Annual Budget and Work Programme (ABWP); (ii) coordinate and facilitate the operational implementation of project outputs and activities; (iii) implement the regional components of the project; (iv) promote synergy between the national and regional levels.

The National Project Steering Committee (NPSC). This is the governing body for the implementation of the project at national level. As the National Inclusive Coordination and Consultation Platform, its mission is to ensure that all stakeholders participate in and contribute to the implementation of the project at national and local levels.

The National Project Management Unit (NPMU) is the coordinating body for the implementation of activities at national level. Set up in each beneficiary country, its overall mission is to ensure a technical link with the regional project management unit for better coordination between the local, national and regional levels, and to manage the project at national/local level.

The activities carried out in the framework of the establishment of the different bodies are

- ❖ **For the Regional Steering Committee of the Project**, the decision act of its creation was prepared and submitted to the ECOWAS Commissioner in charge of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources for signature.

The decision to set up the regional steering committee defines the committee's remit, composition and operation. It is chaired by the ECOWAS Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources. Its secretariat is provided by two chairmen of the National Steering Committee, members of the Regional Steering Committee,

- ❖ **Concerning the Regional Project Management Unit**, in addition to the decision of creation prepared and submitted to the ECOWAS Commissioner in charge of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources for signature, the terms of reference and the notice of recruitment of the experts of the PMU, notably the coordinator, the person in charge of monitoring, evaluation and capitalisation, and the administrative and financial manager were prepared and transmitted to BOAD which gave its notice of non-objection (**Annexes 4, 5, 6**).

The recruitment process will be completed and the members of the PMRU will take up their duties in the second quarter of 2021.

With regard to the National Project Management Unit planned in each beneficiary country of the project, from the exchanges with the representatives of the ministries in charge of agriculture and those of the environment, during the launching workshop, it was retained in order to mutualise the capacities and develop synergies with the actions in progress in the field of agro ecology, that the national devices set up within the framework of the project of support to the agro ecological transition be used. To this end, the experts to be recruited at the national level will reinforce these mechanisms.

3.4 Project launching workshop

This activity was prepared during October 2020 and executed from 17 to 20 November 2020 in Agbelouvé, Togo (Annex 7). It was financed from other resources mobilised by ECOWAS.

The workshop was attended by the Authorities of the Togolese Republic (Director of Cabinet, representing the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development and the Minister of Environment and Forest Resources); ECOWAS (Commissioner for Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources, Director of Environment, Director of Agriculture and Rural Development, Executive Director of the RAAF) and BOAD (Director of Environment and Climate Finance representing the President of BOAD). The Authorities unanimously expressed their thanks to the Adaptation Fund for the selection and financing of the project. They praised the quality of the relationship between ECOWAS and BOAD which, thanks to this synergy, has made it possible to mobilize resources to finance climate-smart agriculture in the region, thus contributing to the implementation of ECOWAS regional agricultural policy. They wished that the countries would take advantage of this synergy and contribute to a good implementation of the project in order to mobilize more resources from partners, particularly funds intended for climate financing.

This workshop to launch and plan the project's start-up activities was attended by some 50 participants, including: (1) the Designated National Authorities (DNAs) of the Adaptation Fund of the five beneficiary countries; (2) the representatives of the Ministries in charge of Agriculture and those of the Ministries in charge of the Environment of the five beneficiary countries; (3) Technical and financial partners (EU, AECID, FAO); (4) regional institutions (ECOWAS, BOAD, CILSS and AGRHYMET, WASCAL); (4) regional producers' organisations represented by ROPPA; (5) the Rural Hub.

The workshop provided an opportunity to:

- The official launch of the project following its acceptance by the Adaptation Fund and the signing of the grant agreement between BOAD and ECOWAS; this official launch was pronounced by the Minister of the Environment and Forest Resources;
- Strengthen the capacity of stakeholders on BOAD grant management procedures and the conditions of the Adaptation Fund (reporting, conditions precedent, etc.);
- inform stakeholders on how to conduct the selection process (tender) of the entities in charge of implementing the 25 sub-projects planned in the countries;
- prepare the 2020/2021 annual work plan;
- develop a roadmap for the start of activities in the countries agree on the institutional arrangements for the management and monitoring of the project at national/regional level and the establishment of national and regional project management units.

As a result of the presentations and discussions, a number of solutions were identified for the effective implementation of the project. The discussions led to the following conclusions:

- The update on current AIC actions: it was noted that many good practices have been developed in West Africa, thus making it possible to provide relevant information that can be used in the implementation of the present project. Furthermore, it was specified that the interest of taking stock of AIC practices in the countries is to avoid duplication of interventions;
- The publication of catalogues of good AIC practices: the ambitious nature of the annual publication of a catalogue of good AIC practices was underlined. As a result, it was proposed that only two publications be retained, one at the beginning to take stock of the situation and another at the end to take stock of the capitalisation;
- Synergies to be developed in the implementation of the project at the local and regional levels with other actions on AIC; at the regional level, it will be necessary to ensure complementarity with other regional interventions, in particular the ECOWAS agro-ecology programme and those of research institutions in the region;
- The question of the sustainability of actions by the actors: it was recalled that the approach of formulation of sub-projects by local actors allows them to take into account this aspect of sustainability;
- The contribution of the project to the creation of a bridge between the national and local levels for innovation and sharing of good agro-ecological practices and adaptation to climate change;
- The issue of security in project implementation sites. Participants were made aware of the existence of insecure areas in Niger and Burkina Faso that are facing increasing civil insecurity;
- the call for proposals: concerns have been raised about the relatively long time that the call for project proposals can take, which can lead to a delay in project implementation;
- Strengthening of ongoing actions on AIC themes in the countries: it was proposed that in the framework of this project, sub-projects should be envisaged to support ongoing actions in the countries.

With regard to environmental and social standards and requirements, the following solutions were chosen

- carry out environmental impact assessments after the selection of sub-projects;
- to give Niger and Burkina Faso the possibility of proposing new areas for the implementation of the project if the security issue is very worrying in the areas concerned by the project (Tilaberi and Dosso areas in Niger and the eastern region in Burkina Faso);
- budgeting for all the studies planned for the project.

Concerning the programme of activities for the year 2021 and perspectives, the workshop retained the following measures in order to compensate for the delay in the implementation of activities:

- Anticipate certain activities such as the choice of sites with regard to the security conditions in the countries concerned by the project;
- Integrate the national coordination unit of the project into the national mechanism set up under the ECOWAS agro-ecology programme;
- provide the project with two project managers, one from the Ministry of Agriculture and the other from the Ministry of the Environment.

In relation to the RAEA's process of calling for project proposals, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of activities, the following solutions are retained for the selection and implementation of sub-projects

- capitalise on the ARAA's good practice in terms of Calls for Proposals to save time with the regional AIC project;

- To proceed with the selection of local organisations for the implementation of the sub-projects as the activities are already identified in the regional CSA project. Each selected organisation should propose a list of activities to be carried out;
- Design a selection grid for organisations to implement the sub-projects. This grid should be published in each agro-ecological zone concerned by the project in order to receive proposals from organisations for selection;
- develop a procurement plan for each sub-project.

Regarding institutional arrangements, the solutions adopted include

- At the national level, draw inspiration from the institutional arrangement put in place within the framework of the ECOWAS Agroecology Programme. In this framework, the national coordination unit of the regional AIC project will be integrated into the team of the national correspondent of the Agroecology programme already in place and the latter will ensure the coordination of the whole team within the Ministry in charge of Agriculture;
- The 2 national experts foreseen in the regional AIC project will be national civil servants made available to the project, one by the Ministry of Agriculture and the other by the Ministry of Environment ;
- The RAAA will monitor and evaluate all sub-projects in the field.

Workshop recommendations

At the end of the workshop, a number of recommendations were made to the stakeholders and their consideration should allow the proper implementation of activities and the achievement of project results.

To all actors:

- Establish synergies and complementarities between the interventions of the regional AIC project and other ongoing initiatives at local, national and regional level ;
- Respect the procedures in force in the framework of the implementation of the project.

To the 5 ECOWAS Member States that are beneficiaries of the project:

- Analyse and document the civil insecurity situation to inform reflections on the identification of project sites (Niger, Burkina Faso).

To the BOAD :

- Share the manuals on BOAD procedures applicable to the project in order to help the structures in charge of implementation to better understand the procedures in force

To ECOWAS :

- To recruit a consultant to carry out the activities foreseen for the lifting of the suspensive conditions of the project within a short period of time;

- Establish the regional project management team as soon as possible and develop the procedures manual
- Selecting sub-projects through a call for tender for the selection of implementing structures and not a call for project proposals
- Establish a memorandum between ECOWAS and the Ministries of Agriculture of the 5 beneficiary countries on the modalities of implementation of the project
- Analyse the planned duration of the project implementation taking into account the context of the Covid 19 pandemic and the procedures and consider in due course a request for an extension of the duration to allow for proper implementation of the activities.

3.5 Development of the management procedure manual

In order to have a formal administrative and financial framework for the execution of operations and the use of all the means made available in an efficient and transparent manner, a draft procedure manual is being prepared. This manual, which will be approved by BOAD, presents the general organisation chart of the project, the institutional framework, the implementing bodies, the setting up of the bodies and their functioning, the procurement procedures, the accounting provisions and procedures, and the monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

The manual provides details on the activities with a national dimension that will be implemented at the site level by the project organisations (in particular NGOs, associations, producers' organisations or local authorities working in the agro-ecological zones selected by the AIC project) and the beneficiaries.

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3.6 Elaboration of the PTBA 2021

As part of the implementation of the project, it is foreseen that the annual work plan and budget will be developed during the project implementation period. The budgeted annual work plan for 2021 is prepared in accordance with the results framework to ensure compliance and monitoring of the project results.

It contains the detailed activities to be carried out for each of the project outputs, the dates when the objectives and milestones of the performance indicators will be achieved during the year, as well as the detailed budget for the project activities to be undertaken during that year. Also, it provides the necessary details of the monitoring and evaluation plan, which includes information on the monitoring of the implementation of the activities and the achievement of the project objectives, to be presented to the Project Steering Committee meeting by the PRMU for approval.

It is structured around three project components and the coordination and management of the project, namely

- Component 1: Strengthening technical knowledge and capacity through regional and local interactions for the promotion of agricultural practices
- Component 2: Scaling up of best practices related to climate change adaptation in agriculture and pastoralism at the local level
- Component 3: Knowledge sharing on resilient best agricultural practices related to climate smart agriculture
- Project implementation

4 CONCLUSION

The project has started with a number of priority activities, including the lifting of conditionalities, the setting up of management bodies and the official launch. The finalisation of these activities will allow the start of field activities. Arrangements have been made to complete all start-up activities at the beginning of the first quarter of 2021.

Annex 1: Minutes of the working session between ECOWAS, ARAA and BOAD within the framework of the regional project for the promotion of climate-smart agriculture in West Africa

Annex 2: Minutes of the tripartite meeting: ARAA - WADO and Global Lead within the framework of the lifting of the suspensive conditions for the "promotion of climate-smart agriculture" project

Annex 3: Lifting of conditionalities for the first: Actions to be taken

Annex 4: Terms of Reference for the Recruitment of the Coordinator

Annex 5: Terms of Reference for the Recruitment of Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

Annex 6: Terms of Reference for the Recruitment of Administrative, Financial and Procurement Experts

Annex 7: Report of the regional workshop to launch and plan the implementation of the Regional Project for the Promotion of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) in West Africa